

## REGIONAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION COMMENTS

### **The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana**

9:30 AM – 12:30 PM, Saturday, September 29, 2012

*Resolution on the Issue of Sexual Orientation*

*With Regard to Ordination, Licensing/Commissioning, and Standing  
in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana*

Good morning. My name is Doug Sloan. At Central Christian Church in Terre Haute, I am an Elder and the Treasurer and a member of the choir. Professionally, I am a computer instructor at Ivy Tech Community College. My Bachelor's degree is in Management Information Systems and my Master's degree is in Curriculum and Instruction. I offer my thanks to each of you for being here today. Your time and participation in this Regional Assembly is much appreciated.

Here is my story – I am a testosterone-laden heterosexual male. My wife and I have been married for 17 years. As a boy, I never went through a phase of hating girls. I have always been attracted to the ladies. My earliest memory of this attraction occurred in kindergarten. I remember one girl in my class as being especially attractive both in appearance and appeal. Now, because we are talking about being 5 or 6 years old, that's all there is to the story – except for the part where the little girl still lives in my home town, is married, has grandkids, and I still think she is especially attractive. The point is – in kindergarten, I did not have to intellectually or psychologically or philosophically or theologically analyze the situation. I did not have to choose to be attracted to a girl instead of a boy. It is just who I am and my attraction for females is a natural part and expression of who I am. Consequently, this natural attraction for females unavoidably shaped and shifted the directions and opportunities of my life and defined the whole paradigm of my approach to life and relationships. The same thing happens to every heterosexual person.

We need to understand this: Gay people exist – they always have and they always will. People are gay, not because of what they do – not because of the way they walk, talk, or dress – not because of the occupations they have – not even because of the way they have sex – people are gay because of who they are. Sexual orientation is an integral part of our human identity. As such, it is important to note and to remember that each of us is more than our sexual orientation, there is more to our humanity and identity and worth than the gender of the people to whom we find ourselves romantically attracted. Identifying or regarding a person only in terms of their sexual identity is neither loving nor compassionate. To see and respond to a person only in terms of their sexual orientation, at the very least, is short-sighted and too often is abusive and an expression of hate. Gay people tell the same story I just told. Homosexual people tell the same story that is told by heterosexual people – at some point in our lives we find that we are naturally attracted to one gender or the other. Heterosexual people find that they are naturally attracted to people of the opposite gender. Homosexual people find they are naturally attracted to people of the same gender. Even though heterosexuals out-number homosexuals by an approximate ratio of 20-to-1, both orientations are undeniably natural, normal, and historical facts of human existence. It is the way life unavoidably is and it is the way life has always been.

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Homosexuality is a fact accepted by the American Medical Association since 1984 and by the American Psychiatric Association since 1977. For both the APA and the AMA, homosexuality is neither abnormal nor pathological. To put it in lay terms; psychiatrists and doctors do not see homosexuality as either weird or sick. To psychiatrists and doctors, homosexuality – as a sexual orientation – is normal and healthy. It also means that homosexuality – as a sexual orientation – has nothing to do with child abuse, pedophilia, bestiality, or some fictional agenda to make the whole world gay. Both the APA and the AMA oppose any idea that homosexuality is a condition or flaw or inadequacy that can or should be cured or fixed. Attempting to cure or fix or in any way convert or modify the sexual orientation of any person is an unhealthy action and should be viewed as a deliberately harmful action. Because the healthiness and normalcy and harmlessness of homosexuality is a widely-held medical and psychiatric scientific fact, it is admissible and persuasive evidence in the legal system of United States.

Our current ordination policy is unconstitutional. In 2003, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that anti-sodomy laws are unconstitutional (*Lawrence v. Texas* - 539 U.S. 558 (2003)). This means that it is unconstitutional to make homosexuality illegal or to use homosexuality as a basis for exclusion or discrimination. It also means that it is unconstitutional for the government to specify or limit or in any way interfere with any private sexual relationship between consenting adults. Equally important is that the legal reasoning previously used in *Bowers v. Hardwick*, 478 U. S. 186 (1986), which had upheld anti-sodomy laws, would no longer be a “binding precedent” and the *Bowers* decision and the reasoning used to reach that decision were reversed and invalidated. Specifically, just because a behavior is considered immoral by a portion or even a majority of citizens is insufficient reason for limiting or denying the constitutional rights of those who engage in such behavior.

As long as we remain a public institution, our current ordination policy will be regarded as unconstitutional. If we were to close our doors to the public and have private gatherings to which we gained admission by showing a current dues card (or some other membership verification process), then we would have constitutional protection to exclude and discriminate. If our doors are open to the public – if anyone can worship with us – then we have no legal basis to exclude and discriminate.

This, as a general rule, should counsel against attempts by the State, or a court, to define the meaning of the relationship or to set its boundaries absent injury to a person or abuse of an institution the law protects. It suffices for us to acknowledge that adults may choose to enter upon this relationship in the confines of their homes and their own private lives and still retain their dignity as free persons. When sexuality finds overt expression in intimate conduct with another person, the conduct can be but one element in a personal bond that is more enduring. The liberty protected by the Constitution allows homosexual persons the right to make this choice. [p. 567]

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It must be acknowledged, of course, that the Court in *Bowers* was making the broader point that for centuries there have been powerful voices to condemn homosexual conduct as immoral. The condemnation has been shaped by religious beliefs, conceptions of right and acceptable behavior, and respect for the traditional family. For many persons these are not trivial concerns but profound and deep convictions accepted as ethical and moral principles to which they aspire and which thus determine the course of their lives. These considerations do not answer the question before us, however. The issue is whether the majority may use the power of the State to enforce these views on the whole society through operation of the criminal law. “Our obligation is to define the liberty of all, not to mandate our own moral code.” *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pa. v. Casey*, 505 U. S. 833, 850 (1992). [p. 571]

In all events we think that our laws and traditions in the past half century are of most relevance here. These references show an emerging awareness that liberty gives substantial protection to adult persons in deciding how to conduct their private lives in matters pertaining to sex. [p. 572]

When homosexual conduct is made criminal by the law of the State, that declaration in and of itself is an invitation to subject homosexual persons to discrimination both in the public and in the private spheres. The central holding of *Bowers* has been brought in question by this case, and it should be addressed. Its continuance as precedent demeans the lives of homosexual persons. [p. 575]

The rationale of *Bowers* does not withstand careful analysis. In his dissenting opinion in *Bowers* JUSTICE STEVENS came to these conclusions:

“Our prior cases make two propositions abundantly clear. First, the fact that the governing majority in a State has traditionally viewed a particular practice as immoral is not a sufficient reason for upholding a law prohibiting the practice; neither history nor tradition could save a law prohibiting miscegenation from constitutional attack. Second, individual decisions by married persons, concerning the intimacies of their physical relationship, even when not intended to produce offspring, are a form of ‘liberty’ protected by the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Moreover, this protection extends to intimate choices by unmarried as well as married persons.” 478 U. S., at 216 (footnotes and citations omitted).

JUSTICE STEVENS’ analysis, in our view, should have been controlling in *Bowers* and should control here.

*Bowers* was not correct when it was decided, and it is not correct today. It ought not to remain binding precedent. *Bowers v. Hardwick* should be and now is overruled. [pp. 578-579]

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[JUSTICE O'CONNOR, J., concurring in the judgment] This case raises a different issue than *Bowers*: whether, under the Equal Protection Clause, moral disapproval is a legitimate state interest to justify by itself a statute that bans homosexual sodomy, but not heterosexual sodomy. It is not. Moral disapproval of this group, like a bare desire to harm the group, is an interest that is insufficient to satisfy rational basis review under the Equal Protection Clause. See, e. g., *Department of Agriculture v. Moreno*, 413 U. S., at 534; *Romer v. Evans*, 517 U. S., at 634–635. Indeed, we have never held that moral disapproval, without any other asserted state interest, is a sufficient rationale under the Equal Protection Clause to justify a law that discriminates among groups of persons.

Moral disapproval of a group cannot be a legitimate governmental interest under the Equal Protection Clause because legal classifications must not be “drawn for the purpose of disadvantaging the group burdened by the law.” *Id.*, at 633. [p. 582-583]

*Lawrence v. Texas* - 539 U.S. 558 (2003)

The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff abandoned “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT) because it was ineffective, lacked integrity, and counter-productive to the point of being harmful both socially and militarily. One year after the repeal of DADT, a formal assessment revealed:

1. The repeal of DADT has had no overall negative impact on military readiness or its component dimensions, including cohesion, recruitment, retention, assaults, harassment or morale.
2. A comparison of 2011 pre-repeal and 2012 post-repeal survey data shows that service members reported the same level of military readiness after DADT repeal as before it.
3. Even in those units that included openly LGB service members, and that consequently should have been the most likely to experience a drop in cohesion as a result of repeal, cohesion did not decline after the new policy of open service was put into place. In fact, greater openness and honesty resulting from repeal seem to have promoted increased understanding, respect and acceptance.
4. Recruitment was unaffected by the repeal of DADT. In an era when enlistment standards are tightening, service-wide recruitment has remained robust.
5. Retention was unaffected by the repeal of DADT. There was no mass exodus of military members as a result of repeal, and there were only two verifiable resignations linked to the policy change, both military chaplains. Service members were as likely to say that they plan to re-enlist after DADT repeal as was the case pre-repeal.
6. DADT repeal has not been responsible for any new wave of violence or physical abuse among service members. The policy change appears to have enabled some LGB service members to resolve disputes around harassment and bias in ways that were not possible prior to repeal.

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7. Service-wide data indicate that overall, force morale did not decrease as a result of the new policy, although repeal produced a decline in individual morale for some service members who personally opposed the policy change and boosted individual morale for others.
8. There was no wave of mass disclosures of sexual orientation after repeal, and a minority of heterosexual service members reported in an independent survey that, after repeal, someone in their unit disclosed being LGB or that an LGB service member joined their unit.
9. Some military members have complained of downsides that followed from the policy change, but others identified upsides, and in no case did negative consequences outweigh benefits. In balance, DADT repeal has enhanced the military's ability to pursue its mission.
10. The findings of this study are consistent with the reported assessments of repeal by military leadership including President Barack Obama, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Martin Dempsey and Marine Corps Commandant James Amos.
11. The findings of this study are consistent with the extensive literature on foreign militaries, which shows uniformly that readiness did not decline after foreign armed forces allowed LGB troops to serve openly.
12. As positive reports about DADT repeal emerged in the media, repeal opponents who predicted that open service would compromise readiness have adjusted their forecasts by emphasizing the possibility of long-term damage that will only become apparent in the future rather than identifiable consequences in the short-term.

*One Year Out*, pp. 4-5

*One Year Out: An Assessment of DADT Repeal's Impact on Military Readiness*

Palm Center, September 20, 2012

[http://www.palmcenter.org/files/One%20Year%20Out\\_0.pdf](http://www.palmcenter.org/files/One%20Year%20Out_0.pdf)

*Don't Ask, Don't Tell*, 10 U.S.C. 654

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/USCODE-2006-title10/pdf/USCODE-2006-title10-subtitleA-partII-chap37-sec654.pdf>

*Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010*

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-111hr6520ih/pdf/BILLS-111hr6520ih.pdf>

Section 3 of The Defense of Marriage Act defines the words “marriage” and “spouse” for all occurrences of those words in all federal laws and regulations.

In determining the meaning of any Act of Congress, or of any ruling, regulation, or interpretation of the various administrative bureaus and agencies of the United States, the word ‘marriage’ means only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife, and the word ‘spouse’ refers only to a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or a wife.

*Defense of Marriage Act, Sec. 3. DEFINITION OF MARRIAGE*

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In January 1997, the General Accounting Office issued a report clarifying the scope of DOMA's effect. It concluded that DOMA implicated at least 1,049 federal laws, including those related to entitlement programs, such as Social Security, health benefits and taxation, which are at issue in this action. A follow-up study conducted in 2004 found that 1,138 federal laws tied benefits, protections, rights, or responsibilities to marital status.

*Gill v. Office of Personnel Management*, US District Court, Mass., July 8, 2010, p.6

Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act has been found to be unconstitutional in the following federal court cases:

- *Gill v. Office of Personnel Management*, US District Court, Mass., July 8, 2010
- *In Re Balas and Morales*, US Bankruptcy Court, Central Cal., June 13, 2011
- *Golinski v. Office Of Personnel Management*, US District Court, N. Cal., Feb. 22, 2012
- *Windsor v. United States*, US District Court, Southern NY, June 6, 2012

### PROPOSITION 8

This initiative measure is submitted to the people in accordance with the provisions of Article II, Section 8, of the California Constitution.

This initiative measure expressly amends the California Constitution by adding a section thereto; therefore, new provisions proposed to be added are printed in *italic type* to indicate that they are new.

SECTION 1. Title

This measure shall be known and may be cited as the "California Marriage Protection Act."

SECTION 2. Section 7.5 is added to Article I of the California Constitution, to read:

*SEC. 7.5. Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California.*

*Text of Proposed Laws, 2008 Voter Guide, California Secretary of State*, p. 128  
<http://voterguide.sos.ca.gov/past/2008/general/text-proposed-laws/text-of-proposed-laws.pdf#prop8>

Proposition 8 in California has been found to be unconstitutional by a federal district court and on appeal found to be unconstitutional by a federal appeals court. Currently, the U. S. Supreme Court is deciding whether to accept the appeal by the proponents of Proposition 8.

- *Perry v. Schwarzenegger*, US District Court, Northern Cal., Aug. 4, 2010
- *Perry v. Brown*, US Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit, Feb. 7, 2012

In summary, there is no psychiatric, medical, scientific, legal, rational, or objective reason to oppose or reject homosexuals just because they are homosexual. In the same way that opposing people because of their race or ethnicity or gender is baseless and irrational and therefore, by definition, is a prejudice, is racist or sexist bigotry; opposition to homosexuality is baseless and irrational and therefore, by definition, is a prejudice – specifically, in this case, it is homophobic bigotry.

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The Bible does not mention homosexuality. The word “homosexual” did not exist and was not used until after 1860. Indeed, the very concept of sexual orientation was not a concern until the mid-1800s and not seriously studied until the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There is no reference in the Bible to homosexuality or heterosexuality or bisexuality or asexuality or sexual orientation because at the time the Bible was written neither the vocabulary nor the concept existed. Translating or inferring or discerning Biblical text as referring to homosexuality or sexual orientation is as much scholastically wrong and morally irresponsible as it is strictly impossible. Whatever verses might be considered to reference or imply homosexuality or sexual orientation, be assured – they do not, they are absolutely referring to something else.

In the NRSV English translation of the Torah – in those books we call Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy – we find two verses prohibiting only the men of ancient Israel (not the women and not different-gendered couples) from participating in a certain sex act, more for reasons of national identity and religious differentiation than personal or societal morality. Both verses seem to be written with the understanding that in a different cultural or generational context, such a prohibition might not be relevant or applicable.

In connection with the discussion in our age, some people say that homosexuality is immoral. This especially comes up when people on the other side of the issue say to these people that discrimination against homosexuals is the same as discrimination against people of other races or religions. They respond that the difference is that homosexuality is immoral. So the question is: what is immoral about it? ... The law does not say. It just says that homosexual acts are a *tō ‘ēbāh*. But, as we shall discuss below, the word *tō ‘ēbāh* does not mean that something is immoral. It means that it offends some group. In the absence of the obvious harm that other laws involve, we cannot conclude that this law regards homosexuality as immoral. It regards it as offending.

*The Bible Now*, Richard Elliott Friedman & Shawna Dolansky, p. 19

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The text identifies male homosexuality by the technical term *tō‘ēbāh*, translated in English as “an offensive thing” or “an abomination.” This is important because most things that are forbidden in biblical law are not identified with this word. In both of our contexts in Leviticus (chapters 18 and 20), male homosexuality is the only [specific] act to be called this. (Other acts are included broadly in a line at the end of chapter 18.) So this term, which is an important one in the Bible in general, is particularly important with regard to the law about male homosexual acts. The question is: is the term *tō‘ēbāh* an absolute – meaning that an act that is a *tō‘ēbāh* is wrong in itself and can never be otherwise? Or is the term relative, meaning that something that is a *tō‘ēbāh* to one person may not be offensive in another, or something that is a *tō‘ēbāh* in one culture may not be offensive in another, or something that is a *tō‘ēbāh* in one generation or time period may not be offensive in another – in which case the law may change as people’s perceptions change?

[Joseph said to his brothers and to his father’s household, “I will go up and tell Pharaoh, and will say to him, ‘My brothers and my father’s household, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me. The men are shepherds, for they have been keepers of livestock; and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have.’ When Pharaoh calls you, and says, ‘What is your occupation?’ you shall say, ‘Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we and our ancestors’ —in order that you may settle in the land of Goshen, because all shepherds are *abhorrent* to the Egyptians.” (italic emphasis added)

*NRSV Genesis 47:31-34]*

[They served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat with the Hebrews, for that is an *abomination* to the Egyptians. (italic emphasis added)

*NRSV Genesis 43:32]*

[But Moses said, “It would not be right to do so; for the sacrifices that we offer to the Lord our God are offensive to the Egyptians. If we offer in the sight of the Egyptians sacrifices that are *offensive* to them, will they not stone us? (italic emphasis added)

*NRSV Exodus 8:26]*

[The cases involving Joseph and his brothers come from the biblical source J. This case involving Moses and Pharaoh comes from the biblical source E. So this understanding of the word *tō‘ēbāh* as a relative term is not just the view of one biblical author. It appears in both of the Bible’s foundational prose sources.

*The Bible Now*, Richard Elliott Friedman & Shawna Dolansky, p. 188, Note 67

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Elsewhere in the Bible the term is in fact relative. For example, in the story of Joseph and his brothers in Genesis, Joseph tells his brothers that if the Pharaoh asks them what their occupation is they should say that they are cowherds. They must not say that they are shepherds. Why? Because, Joseph explains, all shepherds are an offensive thing (*tō'ēbāh*) to the Egyptians. But shepherds are not an offensive thing to the Israelites or Moabites or many other cultures. In another passage in that story, we read that Egyptians do not eat with Israelites because that would be an offensive thing (*tō'ēbāh*) to them. But Arameans and Canaanites eat with Israelites and do not find it offensive. See also the story of the exodus from Egypt, where Moses tells Pharaoh that the things that Israelites sacrifice would be an offensive thing (*tō'ēbāh*) to the Egyptians. But these things are certainly not an offensive thing to the Israelites.

...

Now one might respond that the law here is different because it concerns an offensive thing to God – and therefore not subject to the relativity of human values. But that is not the case here. The bible specifically identifies such laws about things that are divine offenses with the phrase “an offensive thing to the LORD” (*tō'ēbāt yhw*). That phrase is not used here in the law about male homosexual acts. It is not one of the laws against things that are identified as a *tō'ēbāh* to God!

...

If this is right, then it is an amazing irony. Calling male homosexual acts a *tō'ēbāh* was precisely what made the biblical text seem so absolutely anti-homosexual and without the possibility of change. But it is precisely the fact of *tō'ēbāh* that opens the possibility of the law's change. So whatever position one takes on this matter, Left or Right, conservative or liberal, one should acknowledge that the law really does forbid homosexual sex – between males but not between females. And one should recognize that the biblical prohibition is not one that is eternal and unchanging. The prohibition in the Bible applies only so long as male homosexual acts are perceived to be offensive.

*The Bible Now*, Richard Elliott Friedman & Shawna Dolansky, pp. 35-38

So it seems that the two verses in Leviticus were written for reasons other than defining morality or listing another sin. Both verses seem to be written with the understanding that in a different cultural or generational context, such a prohibition might not be relevant or applicable. These verses were not written to be permanent and absolute.

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In the entire Bible, there are only a handful of verses that might be considered relevant. Yet, just in that same portion of the Torah (Exodus – Deuteronomy), forgiveness is requested or offered 20 times. There are 9 divine calls for justice to be offered to all people and for justice to be applied fairly – even to immigrants and aliens. 19 times we are told that the poor, the widows and orphans, and even strangers are to be treated justly and compassionately and they not to be allowed to go hungry or naked. In the Torah, every time, for reasons of health or purity, that someone is removed from the community, there is always a way for them to return to the community and be restored to their place in the community. The power and authority of the Torah is not in legalistic behavioral restrictions and ritual requirements, it is in its divine call for a community of justice and compassion.

Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

*NRSV Matthew 5:17-20*

When Jesus advocates preserving and following the Law: **1)** as a faithful practicing Jew and as an expert in the Torah and the Prophets, he meant it **2)** because if the people followed the entire Law as written in the Torah and in the way it is proclaimed and exhorted by the prophets, that would include following the laws requiring forgiveness, justice, compassion, generosity, hospitality, and service. In doing so, in time, people would learn that this view and use of the Law – as a source for how to live as godly individuals and as a godly community – is more important than the Law as a source for how to define sin and uncleanness and how to prescribe punishment and exclusion. Living the entire Law as a source for how to live a godly life would lead people to know and understand and relate to God as divine love and grace instead of a God of wrathful vengeance and retribution. For people living under the oppression and dominion of the Roman Empire, this was indeed Good News. The meaningful weight and central purpose and overarching goal of the Law is in how it points away from tribal justice and through and beyond nationalism and legalism and through and beyond ordinary human conventions and relationships to a path of resurrection and transformation that leads to all people living as the family of God in the Kingdom of God.

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In Leviticus we are told,

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

*NRSV Leviticus 19:18*

We hear Jesus echo this admonition and take it to its faithful apex. In the Gospels according to Matthew and Luke, it is recorded this way:

You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you. You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven;

*NRSV Matthew 5:38-45a*

Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

*NRSV Luke 6:27-31*

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So, what is the Good News?

The most concise answer and the best illustration is the entire chapter of Luke 15.

**The Parable of the Lost Sheep**

Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him.  
And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying,

**This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.**

So he told them this parable:

Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them,  
does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and  
go after the one that is lost until he finds it?

When he has found it,  
he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices.

And when he comes home,  
he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them,

**Rejoice with me,  
for I have found my sheep that was lost.**

Just so, I tell you,  
there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents  
than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.

**The Parable of the Lost Coin**

Or what woman having ten silver coins,  
if she loses one of them,  
does not light a lamp,  
sweep the house, and  
search carefully until she finds it?

When she has found it,  
she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying,

**Rejoice with me,  
for I have found the coin that I had lost.**

Just so, I tell you,  
there is joy in the presence of the angels of God  
over one sinner who repents.

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*With Regard to Ordination, Licensing/Commissioning, and Standing  
in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana*

**The Parable of the Prodigal and His Brother**

Then Jesus said,

There was a man who had two sons.

The younger of them said to his father,

**Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.**

So he divided his property between them.

A few days later the younger son gathered all he had

and travelled to a distant country,

and there he squandered his property in dissolute living.

When he had spent everything,

a severe famine took place throughout that country,

and he began to be in need.

So he went and hired himself out

to one of the citizens of that country,

who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs.

He would gladly have filled himself

with the pods that the pigs were eating;

and no one gave him anything.

But when he came to himself he said,

**How many of my father's hired hands**

**have bread enough and to spare,**

**but here I am dying of hunger!**

**I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him,**

**Father,**

**I have sinned against heaven and before you;**

**I am no longer worthy to be called your son;**

**treat me like one of your hired hands.**

So he set off and went to his father.

But while he was still far off,

his father saw him and was filled with compassion;

he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.

Then the son said to him,

**Father,**

**I have sinned against heaven and before you;**

**I am no longer worthy to be called your son.**

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But the father said to his slaves,

**Quickly,**

**bring out a robe – the best one – and put it on him;  
put a ring on his finger  
and sandals on his feet.**

**And get the fatted calf and kill it,  
and let us eat and celebrate;  
for this son of mine  
was dead and is alive again;  
he was lost and is found!**

And they began to celebrate.

Now his elder son was in the field;

and when he came and approached the house,  
he heard music and dancing.

He called one of the slaves

and asked what was going on.

He replied,

**Your brother has come,**

**and your father has killed the fatted calf,  
because he has got him back safe and sound.**

Then he became angry and refused to go in.

His father came out and began to plead with him.

But he answered his father,

**Listen!**

**For all these years**

**I have been working like a slave for you,  
and I have never disobeyed your command;  
yet you have never given me even a young goat  
so that I might celebrate with my friends.**

**But when this son of yours came back,  
who has devoured your property  
with prostitutes,  
you killed the fatted calf for him!**

Then the father said to him,

**Son,**

**you are always with me,  
and all that is mine is yours.**

**But we had to celebrate and rejoice,  
because this brother of yours was dead  
and has come to life;  
he was lost and has been found.**

*NRSV Luke 15*

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The lamb was lost. It was the shepherd who searched, found, retrieved, and celebrated the recovery of the lost lamb.

The coin was lost. It was the woman who searched, found, retrieved, and celebrated the recovery of the lost coin.

Before considering the third parable, remember how harsh could be the legalistic and patriarchal requirements of The Law.

If someone has a stubborn and rebellious son  
who will not obey his father and mother,  
who does not heed them when they discipline him,  
then his father and his mother shall take hold of him  
and bring him out to the elders of his town at the gate of that place.  
They shall say to the elders of his town,  
This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious.  
He will not obey us.  
He is a glutton and a drunkard.  
Then all the men of the town shall stone him to death.  
So you shall purge the evil from your midst;  
and all Israel will hear, and be afraid.

*NRSV Deuteronomy 21:18-21*

The younger child, the disobedient child, is lost – even before leaving home. The lost child rejects the Parent as though the Parent were dead. By Law, the parent has the authority to execute this most disobedient of children; a child who, for the sake of inheritance, has virtually and all-but-physically murdered the parent. Even in rejection and death by a child, the Parent is exceedingly accommodating and generous. After leaving home for a distant country, this wandering aimless child lives a selfish and self-directed life and – as the child desires – a life without the Parent. Finally, the life of the child reaches a place on the path where there are no options and there is no direction forward and no way out. There is no chance of rescue, no charity, no hope, no family, no meaningful life and no life with meaning. There is complete separation from love and compassion and family and friendship and companionship, it is an abomination of an existence – this is death and this is hell. At such a time under such circumstances, what happens next is natural and unavoidable – the child goes home. It is not a choice. It is an inevitable continuation of the path and journey that is traveled by every lost child. The Parent has been waiting and watching because the Parent knows some day that lost child will reach the inevitable conclusion of the unavoidable journey, the last mile of which always brings the child home. When the Parent, who has been waiting and watching, catches that first distant glimpse of the returning child; the Parent rushes out to retrieve the child, once lost and now found, to shower the returning child, again, with generous hospitality and generous accommodation and a generous re-inclusion in the family and to begin a totally maxed-out celebration. In this parable, the child never even gets to finish that well-rehearsed speech of contrition and humility. All that matters is that the wayward child is home – for the child was never lost to the Parent, the son was only lost to himself, the daughter was only lost to herself.

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The older sibling, the obedient child, is not happy. The obedient child wants to know: why is there a celebration for the lost when there has never been a celebration for that which was never lost? Why is there no harsh judgment? Why are there no punitive consequences for destructive decisions and a selfish unproductive wasteful life? Why is there a Parent's happiness for a bad child – a disobedient child who never lived in accordance with the lessons and wisdom and will of the Parent? How could there possibly be room in the family for a stubborn and rebellious child who lived wastefully in rejection of the Parent's abundance and generosity and hospitality and love? Why is there no final conclusive inescapable consequence for a sinful wasted life?

The Parent warmly affirms the unbroken love that the Parent has and will always have for the obedient child and gratefully acknowledges the value and sacredness of the accomplishments and stewardship of this steadfast sibling. The faithful life of the obedient child has immeasurable worth and divine appreciation. The life of the faithful obedient child has not been in vain.

The Parent also rejects rejection. There has been enough separation. There will be no more separation – separation is finished. The two sons have always been and always will be brothers. There will be a judgment. There will be justice that is final and conclusive and inescapable. Instead of an eternal punishment of bitter harshness and cold separation, the judgment will be the repair and repatriation of the lost child. Instead of punitive isolation and abandonment, there will be acceptance and inclusion and accommodation – and a great party to which all are invited.

The message is simple:

Like a shepherd looking for a lost sheep, God never gives up on us.

Like a woman looking for a lost coin, God never never gives up on us.

Like a father with a lost child, God never never never gives up on us.

What should have been the behavior and response of the obedient child?

How does one live the Good News?

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus.

**Teacher,**

he said,

**what must I do to inherit eternal life?**

He said to him,

**What is written in the law? What do you read there?**

He answered,

**You shall love the Lord your God**

**with all your heart, and**

**with all your soul, and**

**with all your strength, and**

**with all your mind; and**

**your neighbor as yourself.**

And he said to him,

**You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.**

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But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus,

**And who is my neighbor?**

Jesus replied,

**A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho,  
and fell into the hands of robbers, who  
stripped him,  
beat him, and  
went away,  
leaving him half dead.**

**Now by chance a priest was going down that road;  
and when he saw him,  
he passed by on the other side.**

**So likewise a Levite,  
when he came to the place and saw him,  
passed by on the other side.**

**But a Samaritan while travelling came near him;  
and when he saw him,  
he was moved with pity.**

**He went to him and bandaged his wounds,  
having poured oil and wine on them.**

**Then he put him on his own animal,  
brought him to an inn, and took care of him.**

**The next day  
he took out two denarii,  
gave them to the innkeeper, and said,  
*Take care of him; and when I come back,  
I will repay you whatever more you spend.***

**Which of these three,  
do you think,  
was a neighbor  
to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?**

He said,

**The one who showed him compassion.**

Jesus said to him,

**Go and do likewise.**

*NRSV Luke 10:25-37*

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Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.  
Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.  
Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.  
Live in harmony with one another;  
do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly;  
do not claim to be wiser than you are.  
Do not repay anyone evil for evil,  
but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all.  
If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.  
Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God;  
for it is written,  
Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.  
No,  
if your enemies are hungry, feed them;  
if they are thirsty, give them something to drink;  
for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.  
Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

*NRSV Romans 12:13-21*

Being disciples of the Good News is to live fearlessly and joyfully while practicing generosity and hospitality and service to others; living non-violently without vengeance in a compassionate community as one family that opposes oppression and strives for justice as restoration. This community of a just and compassionate family is the Kingdom of God, where all are invited and welcomed and included without exception or qualification; where all live in constant relationship with God; and live here and now – not later and not someplace else – live here and now a life transformed by the death of an old way of living and the resurrection of a new way of living. The Good News – without application here and now, without making a positive and practical difference in the life of the disciple and especially in the involvement of the disciple in the lives of others – is useless and meaningless and is not the message lived and delivered by Jesus and is not of God.

I was hungry and you gave me food,  
I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,  
I was a stranger and you welcomed me,  
I was naked and you gave me clothing,  
I was sick and you took care of me,  
I was in prison and you visited me.

*NRSV Matthew 25:35-36*

Then Peter came and said to him,  
**Lord, if another member of the church sins against me,  
how often should I forgive?  
As many as seven times?**  
Jesus said to him,  
**Not seven times,  
but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.**

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*NRSV Matthew 18:21-22*

From its beginning, the Good News has been focused on justice and compassion instead of politics or patriotism. When pushed to choose between faith and empire, the way of the Good News has been to respond with faithful refusal and non-violent defiance of the empire. Our faith life is not measured by how materially abundant or wealthy is our life and not by how much political or cultural influence we have. Our faith life in no way embodies, is connected to, or dependent upon or subservient to patriotic fervor or national loyalty or good citizenship. Our faith life is measured by how we attend to and improve the lives of others – by feeding them, quenching their thirst, clothing them, healing them, welcoming them, and visiting them wherever and however they are imprisoned. Keep in mind that this is a deliberately incomplete list. It works in much the same way as when Jesus tells Peter to forgive, not 7 times, but 77 times – the point being that by the time you forgive someone 77 times, it has become, not an act that has been repeated 77 times; it has become a habit, a path, a journey, a way of life. The point is that by the time you develop the habit of feeding, quenching, clothing, healing, welcoming, including, and visiting, you have created a new life complete with new values and new goals and new vision. Once you get to this point, you have discovered and claimed (not earned) and embodied your grace-given membership in the family of God, a membership exemplified by justice, compassion, hospitality, generosity, and service.

*Beyond Just War and Pacifism: Jesus' Nonviolent Way*

Walter Wink

[http://www.cres.org/star/\\_wink.htm](http://www.cres.org/star/_wink.htm)

One of the universal lessons and binding threads that can be gleaned from the Bible is that we are to constantly strive and look for ways to grow in our understanding and practice of the love and grace of God. God does not want our understanding to be static or stuck in one place. The Bible is constantly calling us and urging us to journey forward to a better and enlarging and enriching and more inclusive and more mature understanding of what God wants for us and for this planet. God is always calling us from Exodus to the Promised Land. God is always calling us from Exile to return home. Biblical lessons are illustrated by two types of life examples: those we are to emulate and those we are to avoid. The story of Dinah and her brothers is an example of how God does not want us live.

Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the region. When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the region, saw her, he seized her and lay with her by force. And his soul was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob; he loved the girl, and spoke tenderly to her. So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this girl to be my wife." Now Jacob heard that Shechem had defiled his daughter Dinah; but his sons were with his cattle in the field, so Jacob held his peace until they came.

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And Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him, just as the sons of Jacob came in from the field. When they heard of it, the men were indignant and very angry, because he had committed an outrage in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done. But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "The heart of my son Shechem longs for your daughter; please give her to him in marriage. Make marriages with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters for yourselves. You shall live with us; and the land shall be open to you; live and trade in it, and get property in it." Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, "Let me find favor with you, and whatever you say to me I will give. Put the marriage present and gift as high as you like, and I will give whatever you ask me; only give me the girl to be my wife." The sons of Jacob answered Shechem and his father Hamor deceitfully, because he had defiled their sister Dinah. They said to them, "We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace to us. Only on this condition will we consent to you: that you will become as we are and every male among you be circumcised. Then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters for ourselves, and we will live among you and become one people. But if you will not listen to us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and be gone."

Their words pleased Hamor and Hamor's son Shechem. And the young man did not delay to do the thing, because he was delighted with Jacob's daughter. Now he was the most honored of all his family. So Hamor and his son Shechem came to the gate of their city and spoke to the men of their city, saying, "These people are friendly with us; let them live in the land and trade in it, for the land is large enough for them; let us take their daughters in marriage, and let us give them our daughters. Only on this condition will they agree to live among us, to become one people: that every male among us be circumcised as they are circumcised. Will not their livestock, their property, and all their animals be ours? Only let us agree with them, and they will live among us." And all who went out of the city gate heeded Hamor and his son Shechem; and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.

On the third day, when they were still in pain, two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords and came against the city unawares, and killed all the males. They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went away. And the other sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because their sister had been defiled. They took their flocks and their herds, their donkeys, and whatever was in the city and in the field. All their wealth, all their little ones and their wives, all that was in the houses, they captured and made their prey. Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought trouble on me by making me odious to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites; my numbers are few, and if they gather themselves against me and attack me, I shall be destroyed, both I and my household." But they said, "Should our sister be treated like a whore?"

*NRSV Genesis 34*

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Genesis 34 is an example of tribal justice – and it is an example of how God does not want us to live. We hear this in all of the law and most plainly in this verse from the Torah. Though harsh by our standards, it still calls us away from tribal justice and forward and always onward to a better life, to a more godly life:

Parents shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their parents; only for their own crimes may persons be put to death.

*NRSV Deuteronomy 24:16*

The message heard through the entire Bible; as the prophets repeatedly admonished the people of Israel and as Jesus preached and taught the Disciples and crowds, what God wants is not the enforcement of the letter of the law, what God wants is that we embrace and live the spirit of the law. God does not want a community whose purpose is focused on sin and law, on exclusion and punishment. God wants a community whose purpose is focused on justice and compassion. God does not want individuals who are legally obedient and ritually clean. God wants individuals who are generous and hospitable and who serve those who are hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, hurt, imprisoned, enslaved, oppressed, lost – and those who just arrived and do not know the way.

Our gay sisters and brothers are not our enemies. Our gay sisters and brothers are not the scapegoats we send into the desert to carry away our sins of bigotry and willful ignorance and unholy exclusion. Our gay sisters and brothers are not a problem. It is our treatment of our gay sisters and brothers that is the problem. There is no secular basis or justification and there is no biblical basis or justification for the way we are treating, for the way we are abusing our gay sisters and brothers. Specifically, in this Indiana region, we accept people into a seminary journey that can last as long as six years and cost tens of thousands of dollars (usually covered by long-term student loans) and subject them to the associated deprivations, rigors, and stress of obtaining an advanced degree and then at the successful end of their academic journey, deny them ordination. That is – deny ordination to those who are truthful about who they are. To gay seminary students who lie or who are quiet about their sexual orientation; under the current ordination policy and process, we accept their request for ordination. This process is politely referred to as having no integrity. That description is both insufficient and inaccurate. It is a disgraceful process that is immoral because it is fraudulent. We punish people for being truthful and we reward people for being deceptive and then subliminally encourage them to continue that deception into their ministry. It is a process that needs to be replaced with a process that is just and compassionate and has moral integrity in its application and, consequently, rewards and encourages openness and honesty. Why? Because we do not treat people the way we are treating our gay candidates for ordination. We are divinely called to offer justice that is fair and restorative. We are to offer compassion that is generous and hospitable and healthy. Why? Because we are followers of Jesus. Because we worship a God of unrestrained love and unconditional grace.

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Our gay sisters and brothers are not our enemies. Our gay sisters and brothers are not our scapegoats. Our gay sisters and brothers are who they naturally are and they are OK and normal and healthy. They are not just like us, they are us. As some of us are called, some of our gay sisters and brothers are called by God to a life of service and ministry. They have numerous strengths and talents and gifts to bring to a God-called life and it is way past time that at the very least we get out of their way – and at the very most and at our very best, we hear and accept our call from God to shepherd and assist them to wherever ministry God is calling and leading them.

Whatever the reason for opposing this resolution; what is not mentioned is any acknowledgment of or any consideration for our gay ministerial candidates. The reasoning for opposing this resolution never mentions how we are to respond to our gay ministerial candidates and their well-qualified call for ordination. The reasons for opposing this resolution never include a solution to stopping or correcting a disgraceful process that is widely acknowledged to have no integrity, a process that is immoral and fraudulent. The reasons for opposing this resolution never include a solution to stopping or correcting a process that abuses and oppresses our gay ministerial candidates. There is no faithfulness in responding like the priest or the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Such oppositional reasoning is fatally flawed when it places more value on personal philosophical comfort than on the tangible anguish of others that is caused by our unjustifiable actions. When such oppositional reasoning does not consider the years of continuous and continuing and lingering human suffering, such reasoning becomes an expression of the worst kind of selfishness and greed for power. In any other situation, people being treated this way would cause us to respond with revulsion and to take immediate emergency measures to stop such a process. There is neither a scripturally-sound nor a theologically-sound basis for subjecting our sisters and brothers to this kind of abuse and oppression. It is time to set them free and it is time to set ourselves free from the sin of condoning and enabling such abuse – and the abuse and the oppression must stop now.

There is no mention of why churches who want to call gay or lesbian ministers should be prevented from doing so. As congregations of The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) we are in covenant with each other. It is a covenant of congregationally-autonomous authority and freedom and of mutual trust and respect. It is not a covenant of top-down hierarchical control and obligation. The resolution fixes our immoral and fraudulent ordination policy by expanding the autonomous authority and freedom of congregations to call a pastor of their choice. It places no obligation on any congregation to call a pastor of a particular race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation.

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There are those who are so opposed to this resolution and who would find the passage of this resolution to be so objectionable that they would feel compelled to leave the region or even the denomination. To accomplish what? To solve what? To prevent what? To go where? To be what? One assumption is that by leaving the region and the denomination, they will not be tainted by the presence elsewhere of gay pastors in the pulpit. This would be a false assumption. No matter what you call yourselves, no matter where you go, no matter with whom you affiliate or no matter how independent you claim to be – you are still and always children of God, you are still our sisters and brothers, and as members of the body of Christ you will always be associated with us and we will always be associated with you and we will always be here for you and with you. As long as a congregation claims to be part of the body of Christ they will undeniably and irrevocably be associated with open-and-affirming congregations and gay pastors and women pastors and pastors and congregations that have a global variety of racial and ethnic compositions and a wonderful diversity of worship styles and a wonderful range of faithful expressions of the Good News.

As long as you call yourself a Christian congregation, there is a truth you need to know: There have always been gay pastors in the pulpit. Remember – being gay is not about what you do, it is about who you are. There have been gay pastors who were married, had children, had successful ministries, and who suffered lives of misery and denial. They had a marriage of convenience in which they could not be a loving spouse and, what is worse, it was a relationship in which they did not love themselves. Other gay pastors had marriages that were childless or even sexless. And there were gay pastors who never got married, who were some of those “confirmed bachelors” because – truly – they never found the right person and were not allowed to find the right person. You might leave this region, even this denomination, but as long as you call yourself Christian, you will be associated with gay pastors in the pulpit. As long as there is a preference for lies and denial instead of truth and openness, there is no way to avoid having a gay pastor in your pulpit.

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Even if a congregation could avoid having a gay pastor, there is a bigger problem that cannot be avoided. What are you going to do with your gay children? If children are allowed in your congregation, you will eventually and inescapably have gay children. While you might be able to avoid having a gay pastor, you cannot avoid having gay children – unless you adopt the tradition of Shakers. In which case, you might end up making great furniture, but as a congregation you will not have any long-term viability. So the question is: What are you going to do with your gay children? How are you going to respond to them? Are you going to exclude the child? The child's family? Exclusion is just another name for cowardice in the form of running away by locking yourself into one place – which is truly a form either of being left behind or hiding in a closet. Are you going to punish and demean innocent children by telling them how evil and sinful they are? Are you going to punish and demean innocent children by telling them they are not good enough to be Sunday School teachers or Deacons or Elders or Pastors? Are you going to punish and demean innocent children by trying to “cure” them or “fix” them or by “counseling” them in an attempt to make them what they are not? You can run away from a theology of love and grace and inclusiveness. You can run away from having a gay pastor. You can run away from having a woman pastor. You can run away from having a pastor of a different race or ethnicity. What you cannot do is run away from your own gay children. Your gay children are a gift from God – they are an invitation to see this world differently, to see your life differently, to see a tangible expression of the love and grace of God and to have the same all-inclusive vision of God – to see yourselves as God sees you, to see yourselves as children of God, to see yourselves as beings of light and love.

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You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.

*NRSV Leviticus 18:22*

If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them.

*NRSV Leviticus 20:13*

Yes, we have differences of interpretation regarding these two verses in Leviticus and differences in how those two verses are to be applied to homosexuals. For decades we have had differences of interpretation and application regarding: the birth of Jesus, the divinity of Jesus, penal substitution, original sin, whether deacons and elders and pastors should only be white males, whether miracles happen, whether the book of Revelation is metaphorical or predictive, to what degree should our actions be controlled and obligated by what is written in the Bible, and what is the nature and character of God. For decades, we have had all these differences – and many others – yet, it is this one difference in scriptural interpretation and application that will be treated as a wedge and a justification for departure. Why? Why is this difference so much more important and so much more powerful than all our other scriptural and theological differences combined? Such an extreme imbalance has more to do with personal psychological discomfort than group theology and it is disingenuous to rationalize or argue otherwise. It has nothing to do with homosexuals and everything to do with a personal inability to accept the fact that homosexuals exist and being homosexual is normal and healthy and there is no rational or objective basis for opposing homosexuals in any aspect of life. There is no solitary universal absolute interpretation of the scriptures. Consequently, those who have a literal or legalistic interpretation of the scriptures have no authority to force and enforce their interpretation on others. These situations of such differing opinions must be ruled by a wide allowance of freedom and liberty, not narrow restraints and authoritarian obligations.

Some who oppose this resolution have said that it is not in the tradition of the church. To what tradition are we referring? Are we referring to the tradition of slavery that extends through the entire Bible with complete tacit Biblical approval? Are we referring to the tradition of ministers being only white males of European extraction and culture? Or are we talking about the tradition of ministers being only men regardless of or because of their race and ethnicity? – Or are we talking about the tradition that began with the earliest church of ordaining any gifted person who answers the call of God regardless of their gender or race or ethnicity or national origin? Are we talking about the tradition that keeps leading us to a better realization of the family of God every time we adopt a wider and more inclusive expression of God's love and grace? In faithfully keeping with and continuing and extending that earliest tradition of love and grace and inclusion, this resolution is well justified for adoption and is cause for celebration.

Some who oppose this resolution fear that it sets us on an undesirable path. Admittedly, adopting this resolution does set us on a different path. It is not a path of fear and it is not a path of exclusion. It is a path to be desired and celebrated. It is a path toward a better understanding of the Good News and a better realization of the Kingdom of God. It is a path on which the Good News and the Kingdom of God are about how we live our lives and how we live with each other here and now and how we live together as a community of justice and compassion.

**REGIONAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION COMMENTS**

**The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana**

9:30 AM – 12:30 PM, Saturday, September 29, 2012

*Resolution on the Issue of Sexual Orientation*

*With Regard to Ordination, Licensing/Commissioning, and Standing  
in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana*

Viewing homosexuality as a sin is not a view or attitude than can be held for free – it has a terrible cost and a heinous effect. It hurts people in horrible ways that are needless and unjustifiable. It enables and provokes an environment in which homosexuals suffer discrimination and are excluded and bullied and assaulted and murdered. It creates an environment in which homosexuals find self-destructive behaviors, even suicide, preferable to a life of discrimination, exclusion, and the worst forms of abuse. We can neither afford nor justify the biblically untenable view of homosexuality as a sin.

Neither any sin nor all sin is greater than the Good News.

Neither any sin nor all sin is more important than the Good News.

Neither any sin nor all sin is more powerful than or in any way too much  
for the love and grace of God.

What is "good" about the Good News is that we are called by God

to be in loving relationship with God in a way that exceeds any contractual covenant with God

to stop seeing each other as sinners

to stop looking for ways to see each other as sinners

to see justice as repair, rehabilitation, and restoration

to value reconciliation over judgment

to value inclusion over exclusion

What is more important and more powerful than any human exclusion is that  
we are called by God, without exceptions and without conditions,

to be the body of Christ

to be sisters and brothers in Christ

to be children of God

to be the family of God

to be citizens of the Kingdom of God

to be the Kingdom of God

to live it and exude it and provoke it

here and now, constantly and forever

The Good News has 3 inseparable messages:

1) The universal accessibility of the personal and persistent  
unrestrained Love and unconditional Grace of **God**; and

2) The feeding quenching clothing healing visiting welcoming Compassion and  
the reparative rehabilitating restorative Justice of the **Community**; and

3) The inclusive Hospitality and joyous Generosity and healthy Service of the **Individual**.

As Disciples of the Good News and as an expression of the unrestrained love and unconditional  
grace of God and as an act of justice and compassion, vote for this resolution.

Amen.